



Department of Commerce Safety Report

June 2003

Safety Report

June 2003

Introduction

This report provides an update to Department of Commerce (DOC) managers and employees on the progress of Departmental safety initiatives and information regarding important Department-wide safety issues for June 2003. The report also contains the latest available accident data for the Department. Section One of the report, Program Initiatives, provides updates on the safety initiatives outlined in the Safety Program Plan available at <http://ohrm.doc.gov/safetyprogram/safety.htm>. Section Two, Significant Safety Issues, outlines safety issues and concerns which arose in June 2003. Section Three, Injury Statistics, provides statistics regarding Department injuries, as reported to the Workers' Compensation Program for May 2003, and an analysis of the data to assist bureaus in focusing their safety efforts. Section Four, Survey Results, provides the June results from the on-line survey available through the intranet Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Program Web Site.

Section One: Program Initiatives

Safety Slogans:

While there is a place for safety slogans, it is important to ensure that those slogans are backed up by action. To state that "Safety is a First Priority" and not act on that philosophy is detrimental to the organization. That point was made by Deputy Secretary Bodman, during a briefing by senior managers from a Commerce bureau.

As recently reported in *Industrial Safety and Hygiene News*, slogans should reflect what former Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill called the three characteristics of great organizations.

- 1) **Employees are treated with dignity and respect.** Respect what employees know to be true about how safety is really handled in the workplace.
- 2) **Employees are encouraged to make contributions that give meaning to their lives.** Show how safety contributes in a meaningful way, how the organization and everyone in it benefits.
- 3) **Those contributions are recognized.** If slogans urge someone to do something safely, and they do it, recognize it, or the slogan rings hollow.

Safety slogans and posters can keep awareness up, and put safety front and center. But they need to spring from an organization that walks the talk.

Over the next several months, the Office of Occupational Safety and Health will be visiting Commerce facilities to observe workplace conditions, speak with employees about safety and health concerns, and address workplace safety issues with managers and supervisors.

Section Two: Significant Safety Issues

Power tool safety

Each month, as our accident and injury reports are reviewed, we notice accidents involving the use of power tools. Recently, an employee was severely injured in the Hoover Building while using a radial arm saw. It was determined during the accident investigation that the employee had not received training on the use of the saw, and was injured while using the saw improperly. Ensuring that employees are adequately trained prior to using power tools is essential.

Many power tool accidents can be prevented by following established work practices and being aware of the hazards. While many Commerce Department employees do not use power tools on the job, many of us use them at home. A list of general safety rules that should be followed in conjunction with the use of power tools is provided below.

- Before using a power tool, be familiar with its operation and any safety hazards. Reading the operator's manual prior to use is highly recommended.
- Examine the tool for faulty parts, a worn electrical cord, broken switches, and other defects. Electrical tools must be equipped with a three-wire grounded cord, with the grounding pin in the plug intact, or be labeled "Double Insulated." For maximum protection against electrical shock, tools should be plugged into a ground fault circuit interrupter, commonly known as a GFCI. These devices are available at most hardware and home improvement stores and are relatively inexpensive.
- If the tool is designed to be used with a guard, be sure the guard is installed prior to use.
- If the tool will produce flying chips, dust, sparks or other hazards, be sure to wear safety goggles or a face shield, which are also available at hardware and home improvement stores.
- Keep the surrounding area free of clutter, and be sure there is adequate lighting to do the job safely.
- When changing drill bits, saw blades, or other attachments, unplug the tool first.
- Do not wear rings, or other jewelry, or loose clothing while using power tools.
- If the equipment produces loud noise, such as a leaf blower, lawnmower, or chainsaw, wear hearing protection.

These general safety recommendations are provided to help keep you safe and prevent accidents. Additional safety precautions for using power tools are posted at several sites on the internet; one of those sites is http://www.du.edu/risk/Tool_Safety.html.

Section Three: Injury Statistics and Analysis

This section provides information on the total number of Departmental injuries for the past five years, and analyzes the types of injuries across the Department. The information below reflects May 2003 statistics. Due to late submissions, processing limitations, and to ensure the accuracy of the information, this section will continue to include information up to the previous month. The data presented in the charts and tables are based upon Departmental Workers' Compensation Program records.

Incidence Rate: The incidence rate (IR) represents the number of injuries and illnesses per 100 full-time workers and is calculated as follows:

$$IR = \frac{N}{EH}(200,000)$$

N	=	Number of injuries and illnesses
EH	=	Total hours worked by all employees during the year ¹
200,000	=	Base for 100 equivalent full-time workers (40 hours per week, 50 weeks per year)

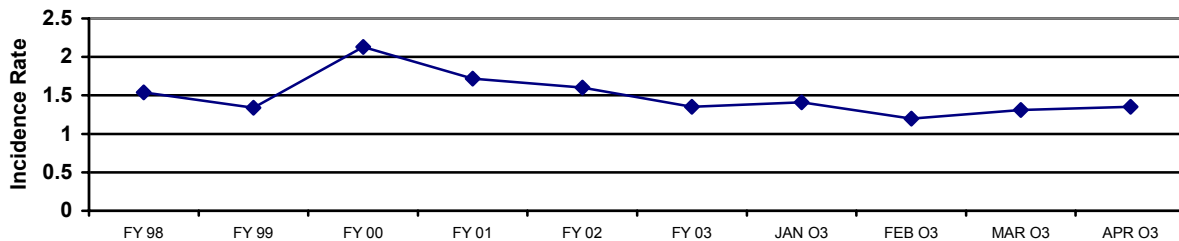
¹ The total hours worked were determined based on the total number of employees and the average hours.

The Commerce Workers' Compensation Program keeps records on all injury and illness claims, including those that did not include any lost work time. An accounting of all incidents allows follow-up and more comprehensive program review by safety representatives. However, the incident rates from those records are not directly comparable, since they include many minor injuries and illnesses that are not considered "work-related" under Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) standards for private industry. Injury rates may be skewed as safety awareness increases and employees are encouraged to report all injuries, causing total injury rates to increase despite improvements to safety. Using standardized OSHA recordable incident reporting helps to reduce inconsistent reporting. An OSHA recordable incident is a work-related injury or illness that resulted in one or more of the following: medical treatment beyond first aid, a significant injury or illness diagnosed by a physician or other licensed health care professional, days away from work, restricted work or transfer to another job, loss of consciousness, or death.

NOTE: Recordable injury rates reported in Table 1, and Charts 1 and 2 were determined from workers' compensation claims. Recordable injury rates were used to analyze injury rate trends using recognized criteria. The remaining tables and charts include data for all injuries submitted to the Workers' Compensation Program.

Chart 1

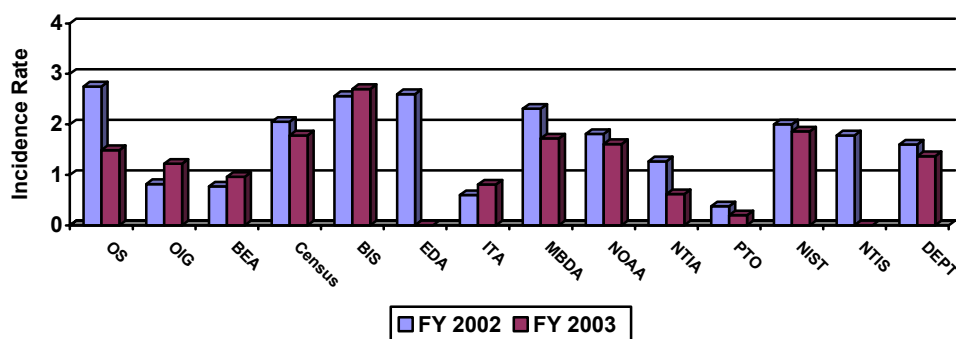
Total Recordable Case Incidence Rate Trend



Major Findings include:

- **The FY 2003 Total Recordable Case Incidence Rate (TRCIR) for Commerce is lower than the rates for FY 2002 and FY 2001.** The TRCIR is 1.37 for FY 2003, 1.60 for FY 2002, and 1.72 for FY 2001. The decreasing trend of recordable injury rates is definitely encouraging. A total of 311 recordable injuries were reported thus far for FY 2003.
- **Of the larger bureaus, with the exception of the International Trade Administration (ITA), the TRCIRs for FY 2003 are down when compared to FY 2002 (see table 1 and chart 2).** The TRCIR for ITA is up from FY 2002 and FY 2001. However, injury rates for ITA are consistently low.
- **Of the smaller bureaus (i.e., bureaus with less than 500 employees), the Economic Development Administration (EDA) and the National Technical Information Service (NTIS) have not had a single recordable injury for FY 2003.**
- **The Total Case Incidence Rate (TCIR) for Commerce is up slightly from last year, but down from FY 2001.** The TCIRs for Commerce are 1.87 for FY 2003, 1.84 in FY 2002, and 1.98 in FY 2001.

Chart 2



Types of Injuries: Many of the injuries reported can be prevented through improved safety awareness and proper maintenance. A Departmental and bureau focus on eliminating injuries and illnesses is essential. Eliminating injuries and illnesses can be accomplished by evaluating the types of claims submitted and structuring safety awareness training programs to eliminate accidents. Information on types of injuries is provided in charts 4 and 5, and tables 2 and 2A.

Key findings are explained below:

- **“Slips/Falls” continue to be the most prevalent type of injury.** “Slips/falls” accounted for 36 percent of all injuries within the Department for FY 2002 and for 25 percent in May 2003. Many of the recent slips and falls were weather-related. More attention must be given to walking surfaces to reduce injuries from slips and falls. Floors that are wet from mopping must have highly visible warning signs, so employees know to avoid those areas. Trips from cords strung across floors continue to cause injuries. Telephone lines, electrical cords, and other cords should be routed away from walking areas.
- **“Struck and Contact” injuries were second in frequency for May 2003.** These injuries combined for 21 percent of those reported for FY 2002 and for 25 percent in May 2003. A majority of the injuries were caused when employees struck open drawers, doors, or low overhead clearances. Those injuries can be avoided by closing drawers that are not being used. Employees should also be aware of their surroundings and use caution. Low overhead clearances should be marked with highly visible paint or tape.
- **“Exertion” injuries remain a concern.** “Exertion” injuries were 20 percent and 29 percent of total injuries for FY 2002 and May 2003, respectively. To prevent back injuries, employees should use carts to move objects and avoid carrying them by hand. The proper lifting technique includes keeping the back straight and lifting with the legs. For jobs that require repetitive motion, an ergonomics assessment should be conducted.

- **“Exposures” were evident as well.** Exposures accounted for five percent of the injuries or illnesses reported in FY 2002, and for seven percent in April 2003. Most exposure illnesses can be prevented through proper ventilation and use of personal protective equipment.

Chart 4

**Injury Type As Percentage of Total Injuries for
FY 2002**

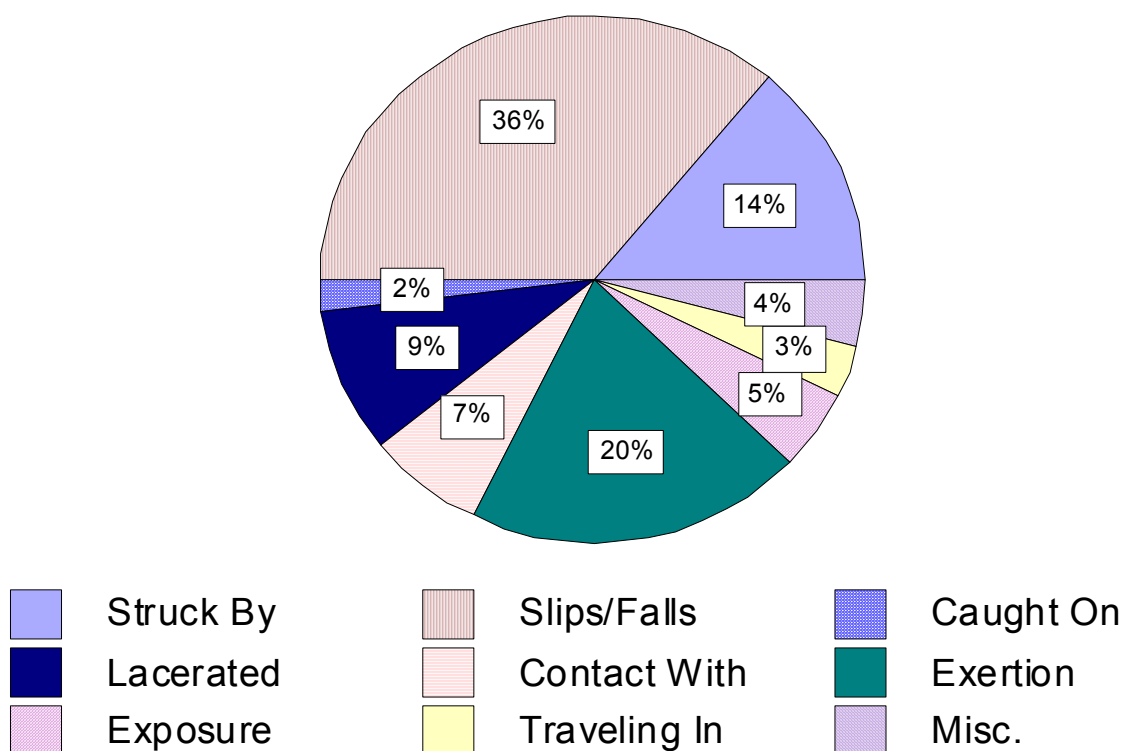
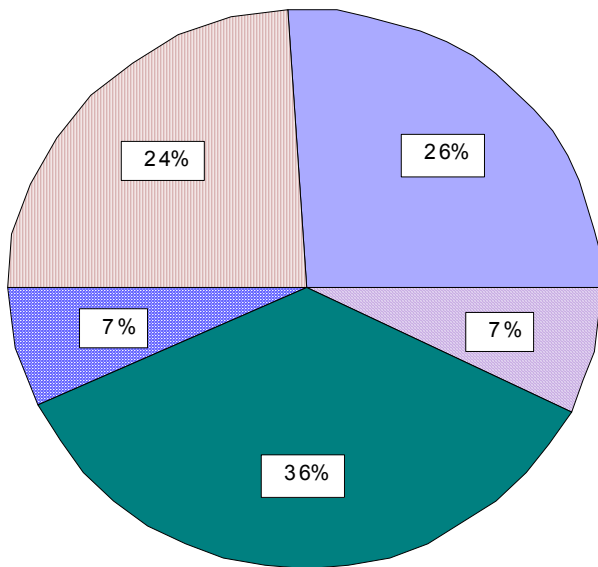


Chart 5

Injury Type As Percentage Of Total Injuries

APRIL



MAY

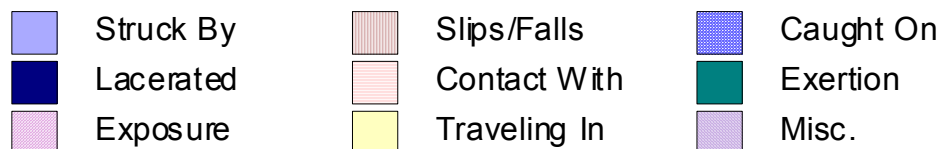
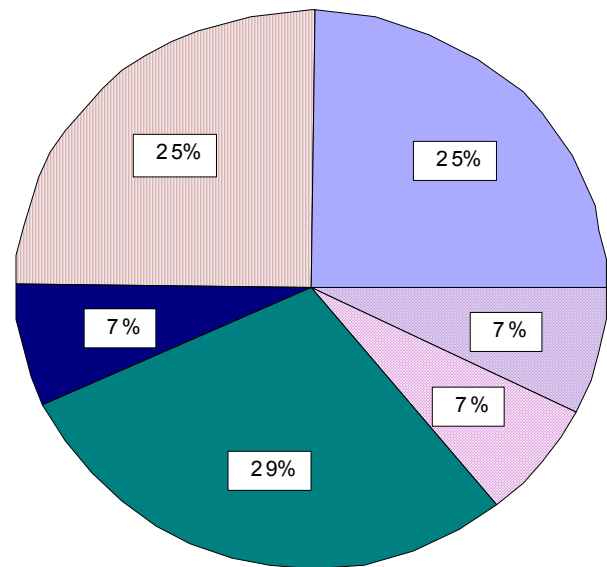


TABLE 1
TOTAL RECORDABLE CASE INCIDENCE RATE*

Bureau	FY1998		FY 1999		FY 2000		FY 2001		FY2002		April 2003		May 2003		FY 2003 (To Date)	
	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate
Office of the Secretary	17	2.38	19	2.20*	30	3.38	17	1.91	22	2.75	0	0	2	2.99	8	1.49
Office of Inspector General	2	1.22	1	0.66	3	2.24	3	2.15	1	0.82	0	0	0	0	1	1.22
Bureau of Economic Analysis	7	1.53	4	0.88	0	0	5	1.12	3	0.77	1	2.67	1	2.57	3	0.96
Bureau of the Census	244	1.15	288	0.96	345	2.55	332	2.04	212	2.05	13	1.64	15	1.84	116	1.78
Bureau of Industry and Security	8	2.42	10	2.80	13	3.52	8	2.17	9	2.56	0	0	1	3.60	6	2.70
Economic Development Administration	4	1.72	8	3.26	4	1.69	5	2.08	6	2.60	0	0	0	0	0	0
International Trade Administration	24	1.23	17	0.86	22	1.13	11	0.57	10	0.60	1	0.72	0	0	9	0.81
Minority Business Development Agency	1	1.13	1	1.10	2	2.27	4	4.36	2	2.31	0	0	0	0	1	1.72
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration	260	2.34	275	2.41	289	2.53	225	1.98	203	1.81	14	1.50	10	1.07	121	1.61
National Telecommunications & Information Administration	3	1.22	2	0.88	2	0.87	5	2.16	3	1.27	0	0	0	0	1	0.62
Patent and Trademark Office	35	0.67	26	0.45	29	0.50	31	0.55	24	0.38	0	0	0	0	8	0.20
Technology Administration	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	4.17
National Institute of Standards and Technology	87	2.96	76	2.60	66	2.36	55	1.89	59	2.00	9	3.72	3	1.24	36	1.86
National Technical Information Service	2	0.66	5	2.18	4	2.15	1	0.52	3	1.78	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	694	1.54	732	1.34	809	2.13	702	1.72	557	1.60	38	1.35	32	1.13	311	1.37
Decennial Census 2000	182	3.4	890	11.3	4798	6.7	32	13.3								

* The Total Recordable Case Incidence Rate includes only those injuries or illnesses that are reportable to OSHA under 29 Code of Federal Regulations, Part 1904.

** Population fluctuations can have a serious positive or negative impact on the Total Recordable Case Incidence Rate.

TABLE 1A
TOTAL CASE INCIDENCE RATE

Bureau	FY1998		FY 1999		FY 2000		FY 2001		FY2002		April 2003		May 2003		FY 2003 (To Date)	
	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate
Office of the Secretary	17	2.38	19	2.20*	35	3.94	22	2.47	23	2.88	0	0	2	2.99	8	1.49
Office of Inspector General	2	1.22	2	1.32	4	2.98	3	2.15	1	0.82	0	0	0	0	1	1.22
Bureau of Economic Analysis	8	1.75	4	0.88	1	0.23	5	1.12	4	1.03	1	2.67	1	2.57	4	1.28
Bureau of the Census	282	1.34	311	1.04	383	2.83	393	2.41	241	2.33	17	2.14	16	1.96	171	2.62
Bureau of Industry and Security	10	3.02	11	3.08	15	4.06	9	2.44	9	2.56	0	0	1	3.60	6	2.70
Economic Development Administration	4	1.72	9	3.67	4	1.69	5	2.08	6	2.60	0	0	0	0	1	0.66
International Trade Administration	26	1.33	18	0.92	24	1.23	12	0.62	18	1.08	1	0.72	0	0	9	0.81
Minority Business Development Agency	1	1.13	1	1.10	3	3.40	4	4.36	2	2.31	0	0	1	13.75	2	3.44
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration	280	2.52	317	2.78	307	2.69	247	2.18	228	2.04	19	2.03	15	1.60	152	2.03
National Telecommunications & Information Administration	3	1.22	2	0.88	2	0.87	7	3.03	6	2.55	0	0	0	0	1	0.62
Patent and Trademark Office	38	0.73	27	0.47	29	0.50	31	0.55	24	0.38	0	0	0	0	8	0.20
Technology Administration	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	4.17
National Institute of Standards and Technology	105	3.57	84	2.87	79	2.82	68	2.34	76	2.58	12	4.97	4	1.65	62	3.20
National Technical Information Service	2	0.66	6	2.61	4	2.15	1	0.52	4	2.38	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	778	1.73	811	1.48	890	2.34	807	1.98	642	1.84	50	1.79	40	1.41	426	1.87
Decennial Census 2000	182	3.4	890	11.3	4798	6.7	32	13.3								

* Total Case Incidence Rate includes all cases reported to the Workers' Compensation Program.

** Population fluctuations can have a serious positive or negative impact on the Total Case Incidence Rate.

Table 2

**INJURY TYPES BY BUREAU
AGENCIES WITH MORE THAN 500 EMPLOYEES
(Through May 2003)**

BUREAU	NOAA			CENSUS			NIST			PTO			ITA			OS			TOTAL
Fiscal Year	01	02	03	01	02	03	01	02	03	01	02	03	01	02	03	01	02	03	
Struck By/Against An Object	24	29	37	56	27	23	16	8	14	6	4	4	1	1	3	5	2	1	261
Falls/Slips	72	59	43	153	96	71	19	22	20	13	7	2	5	7	4	10	2	2	607
Caught On An Object	4	5	8	9	8	3	1	2	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	1	51
Cuts/Bites	20	26	3	36	19	13	12	9	0	2	2	1	1	0	0	0	2	0	146
Contact With An Object	13	19	2	24	11	4	1	6	0	6	6	1	1	2	0	1	1	0	98
Exertion/ Motion	64	64	48	54	37	37	7	17	13	3	2	0	1	2	0	3	1	4	357
Exposure To Chemicals/ Elements	13	9	4	7	6	13	3	3	3	0	1	0	1	6	1	0	12	0	82
Traveling In Car/Metro/ Taxi	4	10	0	10	16	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	43
Miscellaneous*	2	7	7	8	21	7	1	8	5	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	71
TOTAL	216	228	152	357	241	171	60	76	62	31	24	8	10	18	9	22	23	8	1716

* Miscellaneous includes injuries not covered in the standard OSHA types of injuries. These include twisting/bending injuries, emotional/psychological stress injuries, injuries which exacerbate a preexisting condition resulting in conditions such as heart attack, seizures, and stroke.

** Decennial Census claims were omitted to provide a clearer picture of injury trends

Table 2A

**INJURY TYPES BY BUREAU
AGENCIES WITH LESS THAN 500 EMPLOYEES
(Through May 2003)**

BUREAU	OIG			ESA/BEA			EDA			TA			NTIS			NTIA			MBDA			BIS			Total
Fiscal Year	01	02	03	01	02	03	01	02	03	01	02	03	01	02	03	01	02	03	01	02	03	01	02	03	
Struck By/Against An Object	0	0	0	2	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	2	15
Falls/Slips	2	0	1	2	2	1	4	5	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	3	3	0	3	1	1	6	0	1	36
Caught On An Object	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2
Cuts/Bites	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Contact With An Object	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	3	0	7
Exertion/ Motion	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	2	3	12
Exposure to Chemicals/ Elements	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Traveling In Car/Metro/ Taxi	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Miscellaneous*	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	6
Total	2	1	1	5	4	4	5	6	1	0	0	1	1	4	0	7	6	1	4	2	2	8	9	6	80

* Miscellaneous includes injuries not covered in the standard OSHA types of injuries. These include twisting/bending injuries, emotional/psychological stress injuries, injuries which exacerbate a preexisting condition resulting in conditions such as heart attack, seizures, and stroke.

Section Four: Survey Results

We continue to receive comments through the Safety Survey Web Site. We are using employee comments to help shape a safety program responsive to employee issues and concerns. The Web Site can be accessed through the Office of Human Resources Management Homepage at <http://ohrm.doc.gov/>.

Safety Survey Statistics

We received 65 responses through the Web Site survey. The following tables provide some data regarding the distribution of responses by bureau and general geographical area, as well as general safety impressions.

Safety Survey June Results

Have you experienced a safety lapse in your work area during the past 3 months?		
Answer	Count	Percent
No	49	75.38%
Yes	13	20.00%
No Answer	3	4.62%

Have you noticed any safety improvements in your work area or in the Department as a whole during the past 3 months?		
Answer	Count	Percent
No	33	50.77%
Yes	30	46.15%
No Answer	2	3.08%

Geographical Location		
State	Count	Percent
AK	1	1.54%
AZ	1	1.54%
CA	2	3.08%
CO	3	4.62%
DC	7	10.77%
IN	2	3.08%
MD	29	44.62%
MO	1	1.54%
NY	1	1.54%
OK	1	1.54%
PA	2	3.08%
SC	1	1.54%
TX	1	1.54%
UT	1	1.54%
VA	9	13.85%
WA	2	3.08%
WY	1	1.54%

Bureau Breakdown		
Answer	Count	Percent
BIS	1	1.54%
CENSUS	12	18.46%
CFO/ASA	1	1.54%
ITA	2	3.08%
NIST	7	10.77%
NOAA	34	52.31%
OS	2	3.08%
PTO	6	9.23%